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HANOVER, N.H. — Yuri V. Andropov, the head of the K.G.B., is feeling a lot better these days. President Carter, believe it or not, has done him an excellent turn.

What pleases Andropov and his worried chiefs of the Soviet secret police is Mr. Carter's proposed boycott of the 1980 Olympics. While Leonid I. Brezhnev and some associates have considered the Olympics a great feather in the Soviet cap, Mr. Carter's boycott may have saved Andropov's neck. It may even — temporarily — have saved the Soviet system.

Many of those whose lessons in Sovietology began somewhat earlier than the perceptions that dawned in Mr. Carter's mind as a result of the invasion of Afghanistan have awaited the Games in Moscow with keen interest. It seemed to them that the whole Soviet economic system might simply collapse under the weight of hundreds of thousands of visitors and tens of thousands of foreign athletes. More important, it seemed possible that this foreign horde, unmatched since Genghis Khan, might simply tumble the Soviet system into oblivion.

Perhaps these perceptions were a bit exaggerated. But not much. Russians whom I know have been divided into two classes: those who planned to head for the hills to avoid a total breakdown of vital services and transport in Moscow; and a second and larger class that planned to descend on the capital to mingle with the congregation of Westerners laden with forbidden capitalist fruits. While many Russians would be frankly lured by the material goods that the visitors would bring in (sport shirts, decent shoes, jogging outfits, Parisian perfume, even, perhaps, cocaine) not a few look forward to sampling more precious Western wares: literature, ideas, philosophy, a chance to talk with a foreigner beyond the scrutiny of Andropov's minions.

To cope with these problems, Andropov has been working for three years

A Boon For the K.G.B.

By Harrison E. Salisbury

on schemes to minimize the mingling of foreigners and natives. Schools and colleges have been ordered to finish semesters before the Olympic influx; parents have been urged to get their young people off to camp or summer jobs early; complex systems for rotating visitors into and out of Moscow have been devised; elaborate plans have been drafted to throw a protective screen of plainclothesmen between the visitors and the people of the "host" country. But no Russian has believed for one minute that these plans would work — certainly no young Russian. They have been limbering up their English, French, German, Spanish and Japanese. They have made plans with friends to be put up illegally in rooms and apartments in Moscow.

Many adult Russians have been looking toward Olympic time as a moment for unprecedented contact with, and association with, foreigners. They know only too well the ability of Andropov's men; they also know that no police force, not even the Russian, can cope with such hordes of humanity. Andropov has known this, too. Because the Olympics are not the K.G.B.'s first experience in handling a mass influx of foreigners. In 1957, the Russians with notable naïveté sponsored a world youth congress in Moscow. Tens of thousands of young people, most of them supposedly ideologically screened, gathered. The mixing

of these youths with Soviet young people had explosive results. Before the congress, the party and police had managed to hold the line against such intolerable symptoms of "bourgeois Western culture" as rock and roll and blue jeans. After it, Russian youth was never the same. In the end, the authorities simply gave up. Rock and roll and its stepchildren dominate Russian youth culture. So do jeans. What dynamite items the Olympics would introduce into Soviet culture probably never will be known if, as President Carter wishes, the boycott succeeds.

Already Andropov's fears for Russian security (and his own) have been materially eased. Whatever happens, there will be no hundreds of thousands of foreign visitors tramping Moscow streets. Nor is that all. As the exile of Andrei D. Sakharov has shown, Andropov's hands have been freed to embark on all kinds of repressive measures designed to enhance the "purity" of Soviet society. The ability of Soviet men of reason (and they do exist) to stay the hand of the hardhats, the yearners for the ghost of Stalin just waiting in the wings, have been remarkably strengthened.

There is, we should understand, a flip side to American policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. There is a hawk faction in the Soviet Union just as in the United States. Each tough Carter move will evoke a tough one within the Soviet Union. The Soviet military chiefs, elements in the party bureaucracy who have been smacking their lips lately over "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and new anti-Semitic delights, the bullyboys of the party, Andropov and his police associates are feeling a lot better these days. Things have flipped their way and they will make the most of it.

Harrison E. Salisbury, retired Associate Editor of The New York Times, is author of "Black Night, White Snow," a revisionist examination of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917.